

EXCLUSIVE STUDY OF GOTHIC ARCHITECTURE.

SIR,—I fully agree with "Constant Reader" and your other correspondents on the same subject, in being of opinion that Gothic Architecture is now studied too engrossingly and too exclusively; and I am further of opinion that it is studied more as a dead language of the art than as a living one,—with more of plodding inquiry into its history,—with more of the mere collecting facts and the materials of study, than of real intelligence of the artistic value of that style at the present day to ourselves. As it is now pursued, the faculty chiefly exercised by the study is memory and little more; while those of judgment and reasoning taste are suffered to lie dormant and unexercised. The fruit we gather consists for greater part, of dates only; yet it must be owned that that fruit seems to possess if not an enlivening, an intoxicating quality. Even those who can talk very fluently about styles and periods, and have all *Rickman* by heart, or rather at their tongues' ends, often seem quite aground—*au bout de leur Latin*, when they attempt to proceed a step further, and without the aid of book or other prompter, to specify either the particular merits or the contrary of any individual example, or else of any modern imitation of the style in question. The most glaring solicism may stare them full in the face, in a modern antique design, without their being able to detect it.

Glossaries and other "collections of Gothic details" are, no doubt, very useful in their way, yet they go, and can go but a very little way, since however well suited for the professed purpose, they are fragmentary in plan, and so far defective, since it affords no more insight into the constitution and genius of the styles themselves than *Ainsworth's* and *Johnson's* Dictionaries do into those of *Cicero* and *Shakespeare*.

Whether we can yet appropriate Gothic architecture to ourselves at the present day remains to be shewn. Those who insist upon precedent for every thing in modern buildings of the kind, assure us *obliquely*, if not directly, that we cannot. According to them we can do nothing whatever of ourselves, neither ought to attempt it, but on the contrary be perfectly satisfied with, and vastly proud of being *doomed* to be imitators. Instead of studying what we ourselves now actually want, and what would be most suitable for present purposes, we are to study how we may best ape and imitate what was suitable many centuries ago. Nay, there are those who would even have us *Gothicize* painting, and return to what they are pleased to call the *naïve* manner of the middle-age artists—to make *naïve* representations of the human figure as we behold on the court cards—which pristine mode of drawing has in them been traditionally preserved to us in all its purity.

In strong contrast to the ardour with which Gothic architecture has of late years been taken up as a fashionable pursuit, and the industry with which it has been ministered to in a variety of publications, all more or less of a popular nature, is the almost total cessation of architectural publishing as regards other styles of the art. As far as these last, Greco-Roman, Italian, and modern architecture generally are concerned, there has scarcely been a single attempt to render the study of them popular. With exception of what relates to the orders alone—and they are treated far too drily, and merely technically, there exist at present no materials for such study, nothing to afford the non-professional public an intelligent or indeed any sort of insight into the principles of the styles just alluded to. As far as any attempts at all have been made towards furnishing the public with a cheap and popular manual on architecture, they have been most miserable failures, things apparently put together by booksellers' backs, and made like Peter Pindar's 'razors,' only to sell. Of this kind is the treatise on architecture in "Chambers' Information for the People," which displays such crude notions and astonishing ignorance of the subject, that if the other treatises are of no better quality the title of the series should have been "Mis-Information."

One circumstance which I conceive has tended very greatly to hinder the popularity, and more general diffusion of architectural works, is not only their expensiveness, but the

inconvenient and frequently very unnecessary extravagance as to size, which is sometimes as to render them all but quite useless for such reference. Had Britton's cathedrals been brought out on the same scale as those by the Antiquarian Society, even had they been published at half the price they were, they would not have had any thing like the same effect in promoting the study of Gothic architecture. One might almost fancy that architects had old Frederick of Prussia's passion for *grenadiers*, and consider gigantic dimensions, nothing under the standard of elephant or atlas folio, to be indispensable for the professional dignity of their publications. It is upon such absurdly outrageous scale that the collection of Gaertner's buildings has just been begun; yet a far more economical size, either ordinary quarto or large octavo, will in general answer the purpose just as well, since even if it does not admit of the whole of an elevation being shewn on a satisfactory scale, one-half of a regular front—therefore, on twice the scale it would otherwise be—answers the purpose equally well; or the whole might be shewn on a reduced scale, and a single compartment of it or more, as the case may require, be shewn on a separate plate; by which means, even an octavo page might be made to exhibit buildings on a very much larger scale than is now done in atlas-folio works. Many of the subjects in Durand's "Parallèle," for instance, might be given in a less than octavo size.

Apocryphal to Walpole's opinion of Vanbrugh, Horace was but a very coxcomb critic after all—a mere dogmatizer, who scorned to deal in reasons and arguments. Shades of Vanbrugh and Hawksmoor! most amply have ye been avenged by your libeller's own most pitiful production—that execrable piece of architectural bathos, yeelped "Strawberry Hill!"

Should you print this, you may hear again from REDDOWN.

SUFFOLK CHURCHES.

WITNESHAM: ST. MARY THE VIRGIN.

MANY of the rural churches of England are not a little remarkable for the retired, yet beautiful situations they occupy, and the church of Witnesham, seated in a valley and surrounded by some fine trees may be cited as an example of this kind.

The plan of the church is not unusual in this part of Suffolk. It consists of a spacious nave 56 feet long and 26½ feet wide, having a well-proportioned tower on the south, and a small aisle 23½ feet by 11½ feet, divided from the nave by three arches. There is little architectural embellishment, and no part appears earlier than the 14th century. The west window is of three lights, the tracery consisting merely of the intersections of arches, and even these are without foliations. The proportions of this window are very good, but the space is worthy of better decoration, which, though probably intended by the architect, we are inclined to think never was effected. The other windows are generally of two lights of the same character, but there are two of lancet shape and trifoliated. A window of perpendicular date has been inserted in the wall of the aisle, and another, much mutilated, appears at the east end. The clerestory of the nave contains ten windows of plain perpendicular work, and has a fine wood roof, now much hidden and defaced with plaster. The most interesting feature in the interior is the division between the nave and aisle, which exhibits some good decorated work in the capitals of the piers. The tower is of late date, it is built of flint and is very plain; but the battlemented wall and the buttresses occasion it to have a good effect. As usual, the tracery of the belfry windows is much dilapidated. There are five bells, bearing the inscription in each of "John Darbie made me 1660;" and one further records the name of Daniel Meadowe, a family which from a very early date has held possessions in this parish. Of the chancel little needs be said. It was once of decorated character, but all ornament has long since disappeared. The north and east walls have been rebuilt, and fragments of a fine east window may be seen embedded in the mortar; the chancel arch is a wretched specimen of the parsimony of the

last century. Of stained glass, in which the Suffolk churches once abounded, till the fanatic zeal of William Dowling was permitted to revel in the mutilation of sacred edifices, there are two fragments left; one in a south window of the nave shews the wolf guarding the head of Saint Edmund, but the head of the saint has been removed. In the chancel, on the south, are armorial bearings, argent a lion rampant sable, over all a bend gules. There is a large font elevated on steps, occupying a central position in the nave opposite the north and south entrances.

In removing the pews in the aisle a large vessel of Roman pottery was discovered a little below the surface of the ground, and though some bones were found close by it, there is reason, from its appearance, to suppose it was used as a vessel for culinary purposes, and not as a sepulchral vase. It was much damaged in removing the wall, but it probably was not perfect when discovered.

The exterior appearance of the church has been injured by the removal of the battlements, which was done about eight years since, when the roof was repaired.

The interior was until lately disfigured with unsightly, inconvenient, and uncomfortable pews, the removal of which and the substitution of open seats, has been effected under the superintendence of Mr. Ringham, of Ipswich. Sufficient of the original seats were left to afford models for imitation, and not only is the appearance of the church improved by this alteration, but additional accommodation is gained, and increased convenience to the congregation.—*Ipswich Chronicle*.

Correspondence.

WYKEHAM AND SUBARCEATION.

SIR,—In your useful periodical called THE BUILDER, I observe a letter of mine printed on the subject of "Subarceation," and the Architecture of William of Wykeham," in which I find the words "the archaeological antiquary and the artist." It is possible, as I wrote in haste, that the tautology is mine originally, but I must have intended either to say "the architectural antiquary and the artist," or "the archaeologist and the artist." I have ventured to trouble you with this correction, in consequence of the honour you have done me by your public notice of a letter, written chiefly with a view of doing justice to the superior art and skill of William of Wykeham.

I am, Sir, &c., J. INGRAM.

11, South Parade, Bath, Oct. 3.

WATER-PIPES WITHIN LIMITS OF BUILDING ACT.

SIR,—Being requested to take down some wooden spouting at the back part of a dwelling-house in this parish, permit me to ask you if I can replace the same with wooden spouting, as before, or if the spouting must be of metal or zinc; the spouting projects before the face of the brickwork. An answer will greatly oblige A CARPENTER.

Camberwell, Oct. 5, 1845.

•• The wooden spouting may be repaired, but, if taken down, pipes of metal or of other proper fire-proof material must be substituted.

THE ARTS HAVE ONE COUNTRY.—A grand banquet has been given at Brussels, by the artists and amateurs of Belgium, to the foreign artists of Europe,—presided over by M. Van de Weyer, and attended by 130 guests. Among the artists whose names are mentioned as being present we find the English ones of Mr. Roberts and Mr. Prout. The spirit of the occasion is best expressed in its two leading toasts:—on the part of the entertainers—"To the foreign artists, or rather to the artists our brothers, for the Arts have one only country; and their cultivators, of whatever land, are members of a single family. To the union of all artists!"—on the part of the guests—"To the Belgian artists and friends of Art—enlightened amateurs who have as-embled this noble Congress of the Arts!"—*Athenæum*.

INDUCEMENT TO BUILDERS.—The Drogheda Railway Company, in order to induce people to build along their line, offer to lend 20,000*l.* for the purpose, at 4 per cent., and to give a free ticket for life to every builder of a house rented at 30*l.* a year.

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